



**LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP**

**MID- YEAR REPORT**

**2023**

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# SUMMARY OF LAOIS LSP IMPACT

## JANUARY - JUNE 2023

WOMEN IN SPORT

11

WOMEN ONLY PROGRAMMES  
DELIVERED

DISABILITY

1,216

PARTICIPATED IN DISABILITY  
PROGRAMMES IN A VARIETY  
OF SPORTS

AWARDS RECEIVED



LSP OF THE YEAR &  
CARA XCESSIBLE BRONZE

SCHOOLS PROGRAMMES

5,180

PARTICIPATED IN BASKETBALL,  
SOCCER & ATHLETICS PROGS.



LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP  
COMHAR SPÓIRT NA LAOISE  
— SPORT IRELAND —

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

543

PEOPLE RECEIVED TRAINING AND  
EDUCATION INCLUDING SAFEGUARDING  
AND DISABILITY AWARENESS  
TRAINING

RESEARCH

40

WOMEN TOOK PART IN MENOWELL  
RESEARCH PROJECT



SPORTS HUBS

885

PARTICIPANTS TOOK PART IN 40  
PROGRAMMES ACROSS 3  
COMMUNITY SPORTS HUBS

9,414

PEOPLE ENGAGED IN LSP  
PROGRAMMES IN 2023

GENERAL PROGRAMMES



SPORT IRELAND  
LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS

**LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

Laois Sports Partnership is a company limited by guarantee.

**Directors:**

Garry Luttrell  
Sylvia Rouget (Appointed 26 September 2022)  
Brigid Lalor (Appointed 26 September 2022)  
Seamus Dooley (Appointed 26 September 2022)  
Naeem Iqbal  
Niall Tully  
Tracey Percy (Appointed 26 September 2022)  
Wesley Wilkinson  
Ciaran Reilly  
David Hainsworth  
Marian O'Boyle (Resigned 13 June 2022)  
Karen Phelan (Resigned 13 June 2022)  
Marian A Condren (Resigned 13 June 2022)  
Eibhlin Smith (Resigned 13 June 2022)  
Eavonne Donoghue (Resigned 21 June 2022)

**Company Registered Number:**

346789

**Registered Office:**

Laois Sports Partnership CLG,  
Laois Leisure,  
Portlaoise,  
Moneyballytyrrell,  
Portlaoise,  
Co. Laois.

**Company Secretary:**

Garry Luttrell

**Chief Executive Officer/Manager:**

Caroline Myers

**Independent Auditor:**

Shiel Kinnear Ltd.

**Principal Bankers:**

Bank of Ireland,  
Lyster Square,  
Portlaoise,  
Co. Laois.

**Solicitors:**

RDJ Solicitors



Section 2

# About the Organisation







# Laois Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2022-2026

## Organisation Themes



### Active People

Active People will focus on engaging all inactive people in physical activity and address barriers to sport and physical activity for those who lack the confidence to engage, for those with disabilities and marginalised groups. This will include targeted needs-led provision and creating inclusive sport offerings. The actions for this objective include encouraging clubs to sign up to CARA Disability Charter, developing a Disability Action Plan and increasing activity for women of all ages.

### Active Places

Active Places will address the lack of adequate facilities in the area by ensuring current resources are maximised whilst we work with stakeholders to identify facility gaps and support the development of new inclusive and adaptable facilities for the use of the whole community.

### Active Partnerships

Active Partnerships will address the desire for better engagement with and provision for, schools and enhance collaboration with the local authority and other organisations, including those who advocate for marginalised groups and communities.

### Active Promotion

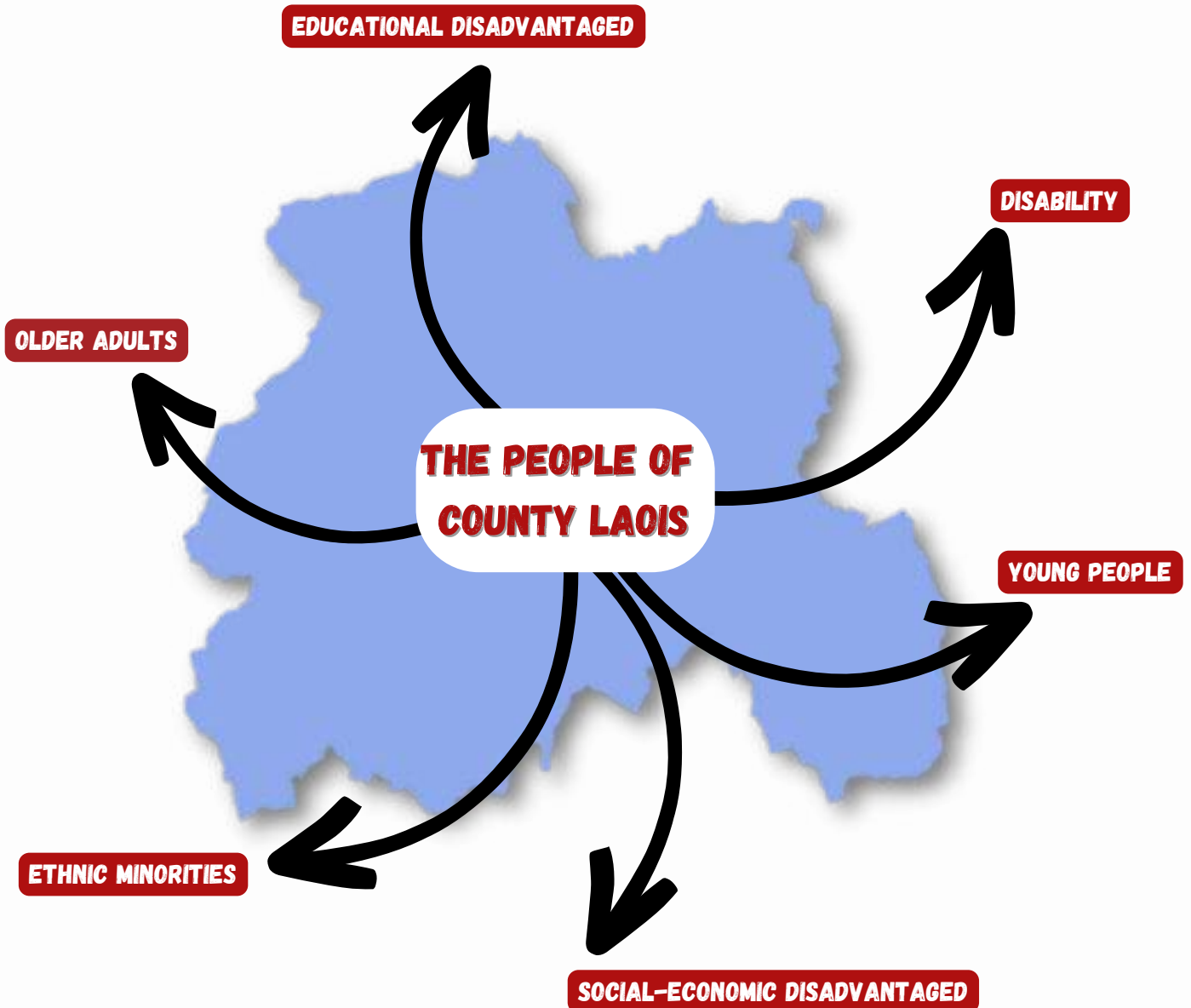
Active Promotion will address the lack of awareness of people in the community of what is available to them in terms of sport and physical activity and better promote Laois Sports Partnership. This will include a review of PR and Marketing, an enhanced social media presence and taking steps to become the go-to source of information in County Laois for sport and physical activity.

### Active Governance

Active Governance will ensure that the strategic focus and coordination is maintained within Laois Sports Partnership to ensure that as an organisation we are delivering to the highest standards of professionalism, ethics and accountability to all our stakeholders.

## BENEFICIARIES

The people of Laois would be considered the beneficiaries of Laois Sports Partnership. The Vision and the Mission for Laois LSP is to support all those within Laois to be active, However, within the general population of Laois there are specific groups we may try to target depending on the activities planned and who may benefit most from the message. Below is a list of the specific groups we may try target:



## STAFFING & VOLUNTEERS

Laois Sports Partnership employs four full time staff members as well as one part time staff member. Laois LSP also facilitates the placement of Community Employment Scheme Participants, TÚS Participants, Jobs Bridge internships as well as work experience students, All of which assist in the delivery of sporting activities throughout County Laois.

### FULL TIME STAFF

1. Co-ordinator/Manager (Ms. Caroline Myers)
2. Administrator (Ms. Rita Aukstkalnis)
3. Community Sports Development Officer (Mr. Liam Kelly)
4. Communications Officer (Mr. Ciarán Cafferkey)

### PART TIME STAFF

1. Sports Inclusion Disability Officer (Ms. Catriona Slattery)

### CONTRACTED STAFF

1. Rathdowney Errill (x1)
2. Bloom HQ (x1)



**Caroline Myers**  
Co-ordinator



**Rita Aukstkalnis**  
Administrator



**Liam Kelly**  
Community Sports  
Development Officer



**Ciaran Cafferkey**  
Communications Officer



**Catriona Slattery**  
Sports Inclusion  
Disability Officer



**Helen Campion**  
Rathdowney Errill  
Hub Co-ordinator



**Mary Hurley**  
Tutor



**Tommy Mc Donagh**  
Tutor



**Lee Mullen**  
Tutor



**Charlie Walsh**  
Tutor



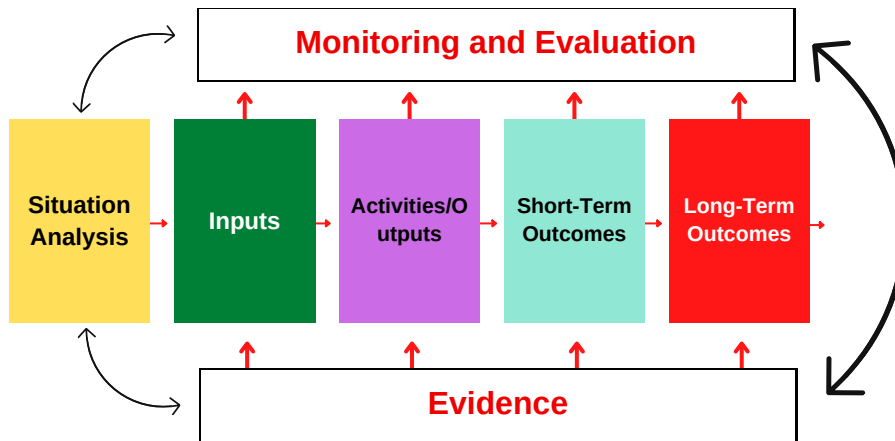
**Judith Ratcliffe**  
Tutor



# SECTION 3 EVALUATION



## THE LOGIC MODEL FOR EVALUATION



Laois Sports Partnership uses the logic model, which is a graphic illustration of the relationship between a program’s resources, activities, and its Intended effects. Logic models clearly and concisely show how interventions affect behaviour and achieve a goal. They can be described as road maps that specify causal pathways and the step-by-step relationship between planned work and intended results. Specifically, a logic model is a visual way to illustrate the resources or inputs required to implement a program, the activities and outputs of a program, and the desired program outcomes (short-term, long-term).

## ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN

2021 Operational Plan											
LSP Name	Strategic Goal	Objective	Action	Staff Lead	Main Funding Partner	Main Delivery Partner	Action Output	Action Category	Behaviour Change Theory-Primary CDM-B Effect of the action (where applicable)		
<b>Operational Planning for activity based actions only</b>											
Quantifying (where applicable)				Target Group (where applicable)							
Target Number of Programmes/Courses /Events	Target Number of Participants	Gender	Age	Ability	Socio-economic disadvantage	Ethnicity					
Reporting for all actions		Reporting for activity based actions									
Cost to LSP (incl. Core Staff Time & Operating Costs)	Level of completion	Name of initiative (breakdown by)	Name of initiative	Type of Sport/Activity	Primary Delivery Mechanisms	No of events/course s/programme s/delivered	Duration of programme/ initiative in weeks	No of sessions in programme / initiative	Duration of each session (hrs)		
Reporting on Reach							Reporting on Evaluation				
No of Adults		No of Youth			PWD		Total No. of participants	Was the Single Item Measure used to capture PA levels of participants?			
Total	Males	Females	Other	Total	Boys	Girls				Other	Total

The images above represent the headings in the LSP's Annual Operational Plan. The document is used as a guide for planning, evaluation and reporting of all LSP actions and activities for the year.



Section 4

# Actions in 2023





## LSP OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS



The winners of the 2023 Irish Sport Industry Awards, hosted by the Federation of Irish Sport in association with Financial Broker, were announced at an awards ceremony at Dublin's Westin Hotel on Thursday, 25th May. Deputy Niamh Smyth TD, Chair of the Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Arts, Sport and Media delivered the keynote address to an audience of representatives from across the sports sector.

The 11 award categories recognise the value that sport adds to the Irish economy from the sports industry perspective, in addition to celebrating the ongoing work done by national governing bodies and local sports partnerships to promote sport and physical activity nationwide. The Sport industry in Ireland supports 64,000 jobs and stimulates €3.3 billion in household spending. For the full list of winners see below.

Mary O'Connor, CEO of the Federation of Irish Sport said, "Congratulations to all the award winners this evening. The awards are a celebration of the ongoing work done by national governing bodies and local sports partnerships to promote sport and physical activity nationwide. They also serve to recognise the invaluable relationship between business and sport in Ireland and the value that sport adds to the Irish economy. It is important to the Federation to highlight this and give prominence to the business of sport."

We were delighted to be joined by many of our friends from across the county as we held a BBQ to celebrate our LSP of the year award. While Laois Sports Partnership name is on the award, it is an award for the county and people of Laois. Without the partner agencies, clubs, volunteers and our participants, this would not be possible.





## OPERATION TRANSFORMATION

Operation Transformation, the famous show on RTÉ was held in Laois for the 2023 series. Throughout the county there was a whole load of activity taking place including in our community sports hubs in both SVT and Rathdowney.

The Rathdowney Errill Activity Hub held an Operation Transformation Walking group in support of local leader, Andrea. The group met every Monday and Friday at 7pm for the duration of the programmes. Walkers completed a route of 1.5km starting from the Marion Centre Car Park. The first night of the walking group was for the recording of the Ad Break Challenge for Operation Transformation. Ad break challenges are pre recorded using large groups in the community, taking part in physical activity to encourage viewers at home to take part in physical activity during the ad breaks of the show.

Treacy Percy, a member of the LSP board and an individual responsible for so much positive activity for people with disabilities in Laois, was selected as a local hero.

Helen, the co-ordinator of the Rathdowney Errill Activity Hub led the Rathdowney Operation Transformation Walking group. She was interviewed along with Treacy by RTE and both featured on the show which was air on TV.

The hosting of the show created a great buzz throughout the county, particularly through the ad break challenges which attracted large crowds at a variety of locations each week throughout the County. Laois Sports Partnership attended the recording of the Ad Break Challenge in Portlaoise and distributed hats, bottles, hi vis vests and bags to those in attendance.





## VIRTUAL COUCH TO 5K - DAMIENS JOURNEY

In January 2023, Laois Sports Partnership delivered an online Couch to 5k programme. The programme was run in parallel with the Operation Transformation Television Programme to encourage and to support the people of Laois on their fitness journey after the Christmas Break. This programme gave participants the tools and freedom to get more active when it suited them best. As part of the registration participants received a Couch to 5km guiding booklet to assist them on their journey.

Damien O'Neill was one of 130 people who registered for the programme. He took part with his buddies Daniel and Meaghan from the Muiriosa Foundation. Initially in the first couple of weeks of the programme Damien and Daniel needed encouragement from Meaghan. Soon this encouragement was not required. The two lads saw their distance increase and their times improving, they were seeing the progress that they were making and this motivated them even further.

During this time, the RTE programme 'Operation Transformation' was being recorded throughout the County of Laois. Damien and Daniel attended the Ad Break Challenges to take part in the exercises which were recorded for the show. Damien continued to attend the Ad Break Challenges and caught the eye of Rob O'Connor, one of the programmes producers and he encouraged Damien to visit the shows 5km finale in the Phoenix Park in Dublin. Damien and his father Tadgh accepted the offer and made their way to the Phoenix Park. Only a couple of weeks after beginning our couch to 5km programme Damien completed a 5km along with 100's of others in Dublin. This along was a fantastic milestone in itself but Damien wasted no time in taking on his next challenge.

On St. Patricks Day, Damien and his father pulled their gear back on and completed the Streets of Portlaoise. Damien received an incredible amount of support and was cheered on as he crossed the finish line with a big smile on his face. All at Laois Sports Partnership are massively proud of Damien and all he has achieved recently. We look forward to following what he does next. Damien is also a very strong swimmer and a member of the Laochra Laois Special Olympics Team.





## OPENING OF ACCESSIBLE GYM



On Tuesday 23rd May 2023, the IWA Portlaoise Accessible Gym was officially opened. This project which was funded by Sport Ireland Dormant Account Capital Project, is an outstanding achievement and a fantastic new addition, not only to Laois but surrounding Counties.

The need was identified through the partnership workings of Laois Sports Partnership disability officer Catriona Slattery with Sylvia Rouget and the service users in the IWA following a period of training in the Laois GAA Centre of Excellence Gym. Service users were thrilled to have access to a training facility and expressed interest in having their own gym equipment at the IWA facility in St. Fintan's Hospital, Portlaoise. "It goes to show what can be achieved in a short amount of time. Less than 6 months after been funded we are here today to launch this accessible gym creating a sports and physical activity hub for all service users and people with disabilities in Laois supported by the IWA who are the host site." Caroline Myers, Laois Sports Partnership.

The additions to the gym include 6 pieces of training equipment which are; a rowing machine, a motorped, an easy stand glider, a handcycling machine, a multipurpose weight machine and 2 sets of dumbbell free weights ranging from 1kg – 10kg. All of these provide the users with the necessary tools to complete a full body workout, however one piece stands out as being particularly impressive, the easy stand glider. This piece of equipment allows wheelchair users to be placed in a standing position. Users sit into the equipment like a chair and with the press of a button are elevated into a standing position. Once in a standing position, the machine resembles a cross trainer. The user then uses their arms to propel their legs as you would on a traditional cross trainer. This provides users with an endless number of benefits. As well as completing an upper body workout, by using this machine, users will improve circulation and blood flow to their lower body. Other benefits include improved breathing as in an upright position, users can allow their lungs to fully expand and reduce stress on internal organs. Paul Cullen a service user of IWA Portlaoise and member of Laois Lions Wheelchair Rugby Club said "being able to use the easy stand glider is a massive benefit for wheelchair user. It improves our bone density, our lung capacity, our bowels and our joints."

## OPENING OF ACCESSIBLE GYM

The opening consisted of more than just showing visitors the new equipment, those in attendance were greeted with addresses from Sylvia Rouget (Co-ordinator IWA Portlaoise), Caroline Myers (Head of Sport, Laois Sports Partnership), Paul Cullen (IWA Service User) and Tommy White (IWA Service User) before entering the facility to view a number of different activities in action (Table Tennis, Scooch and Boccia). This gave visitors an insight as to what IWA users can experience on a day-to-day basis and what sort of atmosphere is present in the centre. Donal Brennan, Director of Services in Laois County Council bravely took on off the IWA members in a game of wheelchair table tennis.

Sylvia Rouget of the IWA expressed the importance of collaboration and working in partnership with local agencies. She said, “This facility has also widened the range of service users coming through our doors from near and far and from other services. This is what inclusion is all about. Working in isolation is not conducive to inclusion, we should all open the doors to our services and share not only our facilities but our expertise, learning, time and efforts. It is easier all around, it saves money, it saves time and it leads to better outcomes. None of what we do would be possible without the partnerships we have with the LOETB, County Council, HSE, Laois Partnership and of course, Laois Sports Partnership, all of which have showed huge commitments to meeting the needs of our members and consulting with them on an ongoing basis.”

The gym which will now be used 5 days per week by users from as far as Tipperary, is much more than just as a bunch of weights. Tommy White, a service user in the IWA Portlaoise said, “the gym is more than just a gym, it is a place where we can comfortably transfer from our wheelchairs amongst peers without feeling different”, the gym will allow users to not only gain strength but gain confidence. Laois Sports Partnership and The IWA Portlaoise are proud to officially open the new accessible gym and look forward to supporting users for many years to come. Caroline Myers added, “Not only will this be a fantastic facility for the service users but the wider community which is what inclusion is all about and it will assist in increasing awareness of stigmas whilst breaking down barriers for people with disabilities to live active and healthy lives within an inclusive environment for physical and mental rehabilitation and participation.”

The new equipment adds to other inclusive physical activity equipment purchased by Laois Sports Partnership. In 2022, 3 accessible bikes were purchased; a motor assisted bike, a tandem bike, and a tricycle. These have been a massive success and are regularly used along the Blueway in Vicarstown, allowing those of all abilities to take part in a cycle.

Finally, Adam Somers of Active Disability Ireland presented the IWA Gym with 6 bags of Active Hands Kits. These are gripping aids that are ideal for tetraplegic/quadruplegics, those with Cerebral Palsy, stroke recovery or any disability that affects hand function.





## BIKE WEEK

Bike Week 2023 took place from Saturday 13th May to Sunday 21st May. It is a week dedicated to the celebration and promotion of the benefits of cycling. Cycling is one of the most sustainable forms of travel and a family friendly activity. As a transport option cycling has one of the lowest impacts on the planet and the environment, impacting positively on air and noise pollution. Laois Sports Partnership and our Community Sports Hubs (SVT Activity & Wellness Hub / Rathdowney Errill Activity Hub) delivered a number of fun activities that took place for bike week.

- **Tuesday 16th May – Bike Hospital Day**
- **Wednesday 17th May – Couch to 50Km**
- **Thursday 18th May – Family Cycle**
- **Sunday 21st May – Cycle Bingo**

Cycle Bingo was a great success yesterday morning to conclude bike week 2023. It was great to have our accessible bikes in use as part of the event (Power Assisted bike, tandem & Tricycle).

The cycle started at the Vicarstown Community Centre, with participants making their way along the canal, keeping an eye out for items to tick off on their bingo cards. People of all ages and abilities took part on the day. It was a great example of promoting inclusion through cycling, with all members of the family able to take part. Once again, our accessible bikes proved to be extremely popular with more positive feedback. These bikes can be rented through Laois Sports Partnership. For more information, contact Catriona on 0867935234.

Credit goes to our tutor Lee (Mr Bingo) for creating this great initiative for bike week. Also, a thanks to Charlie (LSP Tutor) for her assistance on the day.

Thanks to Linda from Dilly Dally Café who provided some delicious refreshments for all, who deserved a well-earned treat after their cycle.

Great to see a number of Stradbally and Rath National School pupils clocking up more miles to add to their bike miles challenge for the month of May.





## PROMOTION WITH LEINSTER RUGBY



In February, Leinster Rugby visited a Laois lions training session to support the promotion of wheelchair basketball.

The Laois Lions are a wheelchair rugby club located in Vicarstown, Co. Laois. They have been operating for the past 8 years. While many of the participants are wheelchair users, they welcome everyone to join in. The sessions have a great atmosphere and you'll get a brilliant workout. This is another form of rugby and allows both wheelchair users and non wheelchair users to participate in sport together. The club is always open to new members, both male and female.

Leinster Rugby spoke to Garret Culliton, who was pivotal in the foundation of the Laois Lions. Garrett formerly worked for Laois Sports Partnership as a Sports Inclusion and Disability Officer, he said, "We got the club going in 2014, all the rugby was happening in Dublin at the time. When we got enough people together in the area we decided to set the club up. I was involved with Laois Sports Partnership who helped us to get use of the hall. The venue in Vicarstown have been very good to us"

Paul Cullen, the main contact for the Laois Lions was the person who was keen on making more people aware of the club and wheelchair sports. he said, "I'm here the past 5 or 6 years. I had never played a sport in my life before having my accident. It is a great sport, it's a great workout. Even on a wet Winters night we still keep going, during the bad snow a couple of weeks back, we were still here. It is open to everyone. Some people come for the physical activity and others come for a laugh and a bit of craic"

Thanks again to the Joe Carbery, the Leinster Rugby coaches and their media team for taking the time out to visit last weeks session. We look forward to promoting the sport further and making people more aware of wheelchair Rugby.

For more information on the Laois Lions, contact Paul on 0858870787.

## FIRST VISION IMPAIRED V MAINSTREAM SOCCER GAME



A first for the Portlaoise A.F.C.'s Vision Impaired team as they welcomed the Carlow U14 Kenndey Cup Squad to Rosseilin Parkin May. Sean Poland of Vision Sports Ireland welcomed the Carlow team and gave them some information about visual impairments. The players were then provided with specialized goggles to allow the players to experience how it would feel to have a number of visual impairments. They then played a number of highly competitive games using the goggles. On the breaks between the games, the players then also had the opportunity of experiencing full sight loss by being blind folded.

Well done to everyone involved and particularly those at Portlaoise A.F.C. for their great work to allow all to participate in football. It was a fantastic and enjoyable morning for all. Another great example of how sport can bring people together.





## GREEN GYM BOOKLET

The second edition of the Green Gym User guide for County Laois was published earlier this year. There are currently 6 public Green Gyms throughout the County. Within this guide you will find details on; Benefits, Locations, Examples of Equipment, Exercise Tips and Other Green Gym Alternatives.

*“We are delighted to update the Laois ‘Green Gym User Guide’ document. Green Gyms offer high quality outdoor gym equipment which will create healthier communities that results in improved quality of life .*

*The Green Gym is an innovative, socially inclusive alternative to traditional gyms that acts as a vehicle for health. Providing a natural workout outdoors, the Green Gym aims to help to improve participants’ physical activity and mental well-being, while benefiting the local environment. Green Gym is for Everyone! From Teenagers to Adults & Seniors and everyone in-between to encourage a more healthy active living...*

*As the vision of Laois Sports Partnership is everybody active in County Laois, we welcome the Green Gyms to Laois as it provides more opportunities for people to take part in physical activity and ensures that communi-ties get the benefit of the play and recreation facilities. By producing this 2nd edition of ‘Green Gym User Guide’ we hope that more people will be encouraged to utilise the equipment which is free for everyone to use no matter what age.*

*Is mise le meas,”* **Caroline Myers.**





## WOMEN IN SPORT WEEK

Women in Sport Week was held between Monday 6th March – Sunday 12th March 2023.

The aim of Women in Sport Week is to:

- Celebrate every women and girl who plays, coaches, officiates, volunteers, works in and leads out on Women in Sport.
- Promote and highlight the ongoing work of Sport Ireland, NGBs, LSPs and other stakeholders and clubs under the topic of Women in Sport.
- Highlight some of the programmes/initiatives funded by Sport Ireland Women in Sport Programme.

During the week Laois Sports Partnership held a number of females only programmes, 2 women in sport specific courses online and we interviewed 6 local female sporting hero's during the week. Sport Ireland and Edufit both delivered online workshops for women. Coaching Teenage Girls was the topic of Sport Ireland's workshop, aimed at coaches and providing them with an insight to the specific needs and considerations for the teenage girls that they coach. Edufit's targeted audience was teenage girls. This workshop was called 'Training and the Female Cycle', this workshop was delivered excellently by Dr. Kiera Ward and Nutritionist Ruth Kavannagh. The details of the workshop were tips and information for teenage girls and how to manage their training during their cycle.

Midlands escape delivered 2 fantastic days of activities during the week for TY students, the activities included kayaking, biking and team building exercises for teenage girls. Other activities this week included chair pilates with women from the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) and a family orienteering event in Emo Court.

There are many fantastic female role models throughout the county of Laois, the county is rich in dedicated sports people and terrific athletes. We interviewed 6 of these fantastic women and shared Q&A's with them across our social media platforms. The women interviewed were Treacy Percy, Noeleen Condron, Nicole Turner, Aisling Donoher, Kylie Murphy and Della Doherty. The interviews range from recreation sports, disability sports and elite / international athletes.



## CARA XCESSIBLE BRONZE AWARD ACHIEVED

In March, Laois Sports Partnership achieved the Cara (now Active Disability Ireland) Xcessible Bronze award following the organisations participation on the Xcessible Bronze programme journey. This award was received in recognition of the hard and consistent work of the LSP in disability and inclusion. The LSP as an organisation has shown its commitment to providing opportunities for all to participate in sport and physical activity.

Thanks to the Cara team for their support and guidance in the collation of evidence for our application.

Thank you to the LSP Board, partner agencies, clubs and the people of Laois who support the LSP in it's mission to provide opportunities for all to participate in sport and physical activity. We are delighted to have received the Xcessible Bronze Award from Cara this morning.



## ADDICTION WEEK WITH MIDLANDS PRISON

As part of Addiction Week in the Midlands Prison, they have been running a number of activities this week to promote the benefits of sport and physical activity.

One of the activities arranged was an in house soccer tournament. St. Patrick's Boys from Graiguecullen visited the Prison to play the winners.

It was a positive and educational experience for both teams. The Prisoners and Carlow team delivered a competitive game with some impressive football being played.

It is a great example of integrating communities, using sport as the key component.





## COUCH TO 50KM CYCLE PROGRAMME

Laois Cycling Club recently completed their Couch to 50km Cycling programme, following 8 weeks of training in a build up to the 50km distance, a finale cycle was hosted from Race Right Cycles in Portlaoise. The purpose of this programme was to promote cycling in Laois and act as an introduction pathway to Laois cycle club. This initiative gives the participants the opportunity to build up their cycling experience and confidence of cycling out on the as part of a group.

Laois Sports Partnership supported the programme, which consisted of the group meeting every Wednesday evening for the 8 weeks a completing a cycling which the distance progressively throughout the programme. There was a core group of 16-22 dedicated participants each week, who completed the programme across the 8 weeks, where the kilometres steadily increased to prepare them for the 50K cycle event at the end of the 8 weeks.

The finale was a great success for all involved, the participants had reached a significant milestone in their cycling journey and made amazing progress during the course of their training programme. Laois Sport partnership distributed goodie bags to the participants upon their return and Laois Cycling Club supplied refreshments and presented the participants with their completion plaques.

One of the participants said “I found the increase in the distance each week brilliant. It was challenging but is always enjoyable. The social aspect was fantastic, and I really enjoyed using the backroads as part of the programme. I have found the programme was very motivating, as now completing 2-3 cycles per week. The whole programme has been excellent.”





## SCHOOLS BASKETBALL

We had a brilliant couple of days in St. Mary's Hall this spring as we welcomed the return of our first Primary Schools Basketball Blitz since Covid. We saw 100's of young basketballers pass through the door over the week who kept us well entertained with some fantastic games of basketball. Well done to everyone who took part and a big thanks to our tutors and volunteers for delivering a well run and fun blitz for all visiting schools.



## BEALTAINÉ FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES

We had a great time meeting new people and getting active for the entire month. The month of May was packed full of activities for this year's Bealtaine Festival. Bealtaine is a month long festival in May featuring performances, exhibitions, discussions, workshops and readings by artists working in different art forms all over Ireland. Through out the month we ran a number of physical activity programmes.

The different events held were:

- Dance Classes
- Older Adult Sports Days
- Wellness Walks
- Activator Poles Walks
- Scooch Sessions





## CYCLE BUS

Thanks to Garda Aran Grehan for her support and for keeping us safe on our recent cycle bus.

The route started from the church car park in Portlaoise, then through the town park before arriving at the industrial park.

Active travel is not only great for our bodies but also for the environment and our mental health.



## SCHOOLS COUCH TO 2K



Rath National School held a Family 2k event earlier this year and it was a fantastic success. The event was organised by Rath National School and supported by Laois Sports Partnership and Glenisk. Families turned out in massive numbers to take part in the 2k run. Moez Toumi set the mood from the start, leading the warm up and making sure to get everyone moving. The run was led by International runner and former Rath student, Jack Fenlon, inspiring others to follow in his footsteps.





## MOUNTAIN LEADER TRAINING



A number of programme tutors took part in Mountain Skills Training with Fergal Hill from Slieve Bloom Adventures.

Judith, Lee, Charlie and Mary met in Bloom HQ, Mountrath for a briefing before heading out to the Slieve Bloom Mountains.

During the training, they learned about

- Navigation
- Hazards
- Emergency Procedures
- and more.





## 200TH JUNIOR PARKRUN FOR VICARSTOWN



A fantastic achievement for everyone involved. Without the commitment and dedication of local volunteers, this landmark could simply not be achieved.

Congratulations to everyone who has been apart of the journey so far as a volunteer or participant. We hope to see the Vicarstown junior parkrun continue to grow and reach another 200 hundred.

This was the largest junior parkrun so far with 78 children participating. Also fantastic representation from the ladies in Portlaoise A.C. and Oughaval AC partaking in the road race





## PROMOTING DISABILITY AND INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS

### DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

George Percy of Disability Consultancy Services delivered Disability Awareness Training to students of Mountrath Community School.

The engagement from all the participants was fantastic as they explored topics such as:

- The meaning of a disability
- Autism Awareness
- Hearing Disabilities
- Epilepsy
- And more



### WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL SESSION

A great session was delivered by Stephen Bobbins for the students of Mountrath Community School. Over 30 TY students took part in a wheelchair basketball session! Well done to all involved, great promotion of inclusion and a brilliant experience for all of the students.





# LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP



# MID-YEAR REPORT 2023

Laois Sports Partnership,  
Laois Leisure Portlaoise,  
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